

**Idaho Fish and Game Commission
Special Meeting
March 15, 2006
Fish and Game Headquarters
Boise, Idaho**

A special meeting of the Idaho Fish and Game Commission was held by telephone conference. Chairman Wheeler called the meeting to order at 8:02 a.m. with Commissioners Gibbs, Wright, Power, and McDermott participating.

Present in the Director's Office were Director Steve Huffaker, Deputy Director Terry Mansfield, Deputy Attorney General Dallas Burkhalter, Communications Bureau Chief Roger Fuhrman, and Executive Assistant Marilyn Whitney. Mark Taylor for the Panhandle Region also participated via phone.

Commissioner Watts joined the call at 8:05 a.m.

The Director highlighted new bills and updated information on the bills of interest to the Department.

HB 686 provides a sales tax exemption for certain fees and membership dues to nonprofit hunting or shooting sports. Some shooting clubs were paying sales tax on range fees, and this bill provides an exemption from sales tax on such fees. The Commission discussed whether they need to take a position. The Director explained that the bill came through the Revenue and Taxation Committee, and the Department didn't know of it until it was passed by the House. In the Senate, it was read in the Local Government Committee. This bill is a minor thing, and the Department has no concerns about it.

HB 782, the Department's appropriations bill was passed the House and is on its way to Senate. There are not foreseeable issues and should pass the Senate.

HCR 59 will be before the Senate today. This is the rejection of the Department's rule cleanup on the importation, possession, release, sale or salvage of wildlife. The Department has pulled the docket and has no problem with being rejected.

HJM 14 is a Joint Memorial demanding that the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act be repealed and that no recreational fees authorized under the Act be imposed to use federal public lands in the state. This one came through the House and was adopted on voice vote. This bill is in response to a pilot program of the Forest Service and BLM to impose a user fee to use launch ramps and federal facilities. This would also affect some use of trailhead fees in the Sawtooth National Recreation Area and on the Salmon River. This Memorial would send the state's position to the federal government.

HJM 20 is a companion piece to the former Joint Memorial declaring that if the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act is repealed, then the authority for permitting outfitters and guides on public lands should be replaced immediately to allow for outfitter and guide operations to continue uninterrupted and that the outfitter special use fee that is currently assessed be reauthorized under a new authority and returned to the managing agency for outfitter permit administration rather than being designated for other uses. Outfitters and

Guides is tracking this Memorial, and the Department has not been active. The outfitters and guides wanted to be involved and weren't in the previous HJM 14.

HJM 21 is another Joint Memorial urging Congress to support federal legislation transferring management of National Forest System Lands in Idaho to the state of Idaho to be managed for the benefit of rural counties and schools.

HCR 38, which expresses support for the Idaho Birding Trail is on the Senate Resource Committee calendar today and the Director will testify in favor per the Commission's previous direction.

SB 1258 the Department's legislation to allow the Director to issue a group fishing permit to long-term care facilities passed both House and Senate and will go to the Governor.

The only piece of legislation the Department is really concerned about is SB 1283, which would roll back the senior combination license from \$11.75 back to \$4.50. It came out of the Senate Resources Committee last Friday with a "do pass" and is on the 2nd reading calendar in the full Senate today. The Department has informed the Chairman of the House Committee about the Department's concerns. The other bill that would have rounded all Department fees to the nearest dollar is still in Committee. The speculation is that the author is waiting to see how SB 1283 will fare in the House before doing anything with SB 1420. The Director has been corresponding with sportsmen's groups about the ramifications of this legislation. If it passes, the Commission will need to discuss how to eat another \$250,000 out of the budget. There hasn't been much enthusiasm from the Committee on either bill, and there weren't many Senators present when the votes were cast. Senator Cameron made the motion for the "do pass." Senator Burtenshaw was the only dissenting vote. Staff will work with the Chairman of the House Resources Committee and will continue to track the bill and answer questions.

SB 1385 to expand the criteria for those eligible to receive a disabled license is on its third reading calendar in the House. It passed the Senate 34-0. There is little doubt that it will pass the House. Once again, the Department and Commission will need to work through the rule packet that will define who qualifies.

SB 1391, Senator Stennett's bill to allow the Commission give a free license and tag to children with life-threatening illnesses, is also on its 3rd reading in House today. It passed the Senate and is expected to pass the House today.

Chairman Wheeler asked the Director how long the session was expected to last. The Director noted that lawmakers have a lot of major issues yet to finish with. There was talk of March 24, but that probably won't happen. Commissioner Watts commented that he has heard it will be March 30.

Commissioner McDermott asked about Senator Schroeder's resolution on LAP. Director Huffaker indicated the Senator was satisfied with answers on LAP and is willing to let the Commission wrestle with the issue for another year. Originally his position was opposed to allowing landowners to sell tags. He wanted to roll it back include stipulating that landowners provide reasonable access and that tags be used for immediate family and be good on the landowner's property only. These strings attached would be unpopular with

landowners and are against the Advisory Committee's recommendations. In the end, Senator Schroeder decided not to go forward with anything.

Commissioner Watts inquired about the information Senator Sweet requested on the Foundation. If that has been provided to the Senator, Commissioner Watts requested a copy. Commissioner Wright also requested a copy. The Director indicated a packet of information had gone out and copies will be provided to the two Commissioners.

Commissioner Power commented that the senior license issue really grates with him. He feels it is much harder for families to buy their kids licenses than for most seniors. The Director noted that the National Bureau of Standards and Statistics shows that 65% of the wealth in this country is controlled by people over 60.

The Director noted that he sent Commissioners a cover letter and fact sheet on the headquarters building proposal asking for their feedback. The Request for Proposal is ready to go to State Purchasing to begin the process. The Director has not heard from any of the Commissioners and will assume there are no concerns if he doesn't receive comment. Commissioners discussed that this is a major project and a big decision. They inquired as to the timeline and whether it could wait until after discussion at the May meeting. The Director explained that the cost of waiting was the risk of increasing interest rates and construction costs. He is not sure whether the Foundation feels a sense of urgency. Commissioner Wright commented that the Foundation discussed the project for the first time at their last meeting and that there is a Foundation Finance Committee meeting this week to prepare information for the April 22 Foundation Board meeting in McCall. Commissioners decided to put a discussion of the issue on the agenda for the May meeting in Coeur d'Alene.

Commissioner McDermott noted that the Panhandle Region would hold a fish recovery task force meeting tonight. The Region is getting close to having emergency fish regulations for consideration.

The meeting adjourned at 8:36 a.m.